

## **97<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat Company**

### **World War II**

The 97<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company was originally constituted as Company A, 258<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Battalion and was activated for participation in World War II at Fort Custer, Michigan on 15 April 1942. It was later reorganized and redesignated as Company A, 258<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Battalion on 16 June 1942. Again, it was reorganized and redesignated as the 151<sup>st</sup> Port Company on 25 October 1943. It served in the South Pacific earning battle honors for Leyte and Luzon. The company was inactivated at Yokohama, Japan on 31 May 1946.

### **Post War/Cold War**

After World War II, it was redesignated as the 97<sup>th</sup> Transportation Corps Port Company on 5 December 1946 while still on the inactive list. On 31 December 1946, the 97<sup>th</sup> Transportation Corps Port Company (Philippine Scouts) was reactivated at Manila, Philippine Islands. The next year on 31 July 1947, it was redesignated as the 97<sup>th</sup> Transportation Port Company. It was inactivated on the island of Guam on 13 June 1949. The port company was reactivated at Bremerhaven, Germany on 3 December 1949 and allotted to the Regular Army on 1 March 1952. It was reorganized and redesignated as the 97<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Port) on 5 June 1953. It was again reorganized and redesignated as the 97<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Terminal Service) on 1 July 1955. It was finally inactivated in France on 15 October 1962 after French President DeGaulle ordered the American Army out of France.

### **Vietnam War**

The 97<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Heavy Boat) was reactivated at Fort Eustis, VA, on 28 March 1963 with orders to organize and train to become an operational unit by October 1964. The company became STRAC operational on 21 January 1965 and received its orders directing it to deploy to Vietnam on 26 February 1965. The advance party arrived in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, on 26 May, to make the three LCUs operational. The main body arrived with three more LCUs on 31 May. The rest of the unit arrived with its equipment on 2 June. It was attached to the 10<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (Terminal) on 6 October. The 97<sup>th</sup> had the following LCUs: 1527, 1537, 1541, 1557, 1558, 1559, 1563, 1564, and 1568, and Y Boat Y-487. In 1966, the 97<sup>th</sup> acquired the 100' tug LT-1977 and the 65' tug ST-2107.

The 97<sup>th</sup> helped land the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, Republic of Korea (ROK) Corps in 1966. The 97<sup>th</sup> supported combat landings at Tuy Hoa, Phan Thiet, Phan Rang, Song Cau, and Cape Twain. Its area of operations extended from Can Tho in the Mekong Delta in the south to Da Nang in the north with Vung Tau, Saigon, Phan Thiet, Phan Rang, Cam Ranh Bay, Nha Trang, Tuy Hoa, Qui Nhon and Chu Lai in between. The LCUs provided inter-coastal delivery, ship to shore

discharge of cargo, the tugs moved barges and berthed deep draft vessels, and cranes moved heavy cargo lifts in the port of Cam Ranh Bay.

On 10 November 1966, LCU 1559 participated in the rescue of over 300 Vietnamese who fell into the water when a section of the pier at Ban Hoi collapsed. In July 1967, the company received 35 additional cargo barges. The company provided operation, logistical and administrative control over a J-boat, two Q-boats, two 65-foot tugs, two 100-foot tugs, 142-foot tug, two 100-ton floating cranes and two Reefer barges. In July 1967, the company also picked up control of 35 barges. During 1967, LCUs 1548, 1557, 1558 and 1568 went TDY to support Qui Nhon operations. They received a letter of appreciation from COL Louis J. Maricle, Commander of 5<sup>th</sup> Transportation Command (Terminal).

On 15 December 1968, the 97<sup>th</sup> assumed control of the Provisional LARC Platoon. 17 LARC Vs assumed the responsibility for the 123<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Company's ship to shore mission of providing transportation at Nha Trang, Phan Rang and Phan Thiet and carrying small loads in Cam Ranh Harbor. On 2 November 1969, the LARC Platoon was officially designated the 110<sup>th</sup> Transportation Platoon (Watercraft). The new MTOE only authorized 15 LARCs so the other two were sent back to the United States. In addition the Koreans on ROK Island at Cam Ranh Bay depended upon the LARCs for troop movement and water supply. The LARC Platoon completed training to qualify five Korean Army personnel to operate LARC Vs in May 1970. On 30 August 1970, the 486<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment with USAV Y-487 (Liquid Cargo Barge SP) arrived at Cam Ranh Bay and was assigned to the 97<sup>th</sup> with the mission of handling coastal POL shipments for the US Army Support Command, Cam Ranh Bay.

In June 1970, the company received the mission to Vietnamize the first US Army tug ST-1978. This occurred in Saigon in September. On 28 October 1970, a typhoon hit Cam Rhan Bay. LCU 1535 was returning from Phan Rang. She fought the storm but a line tangled in her screws and she lost her engines and was taken out to sea. After the storm passed, she was found and towed back in with no loss or injury to the crew. A number of other vessels were found stranded on the beaches. It took several days to remove the watercraft and repair the damage. By the end of 1970, the company had the following boats: LCU 1527, 1537, 1541, 1548, 1557, 1558, 1559, 1563, 1564, 1568, and 1593 and exercised control over Y-487, LT-2107 and 17 LARCs. On 22 January 1971, LCU 1535 ran aground on a reef south of Phan Rang Harbor trying to avoid a collision with a tug with tow. The vessel eventually powered itself off of the reef five days later.

In July 1971, as part of the Vietnamization, the 97<sup>th</sup> turned over LCUs 1541, 1547, 1559, 1568 and 1593 over to the ARVN. The 97<sup>th</sup> then picked up 13 YFUs from the US Navy. The 97<sup>th</sup> still maintained and supplied the vessels. In November 1971, Y-487 was towed to the United States and the 266<sup>th</sup> Det. (J-boat), 271<sup>st</sup> Det. (65' tug), 486<sup>th</sup> Det. (Y-487), and 567<sup>th</sup> Det. (tug) were stood down. This left only the 110<sup>th</sup> Platoon (Watercraft). In December 1971, LCUs 1559, 1547, 1568 and 1593 were prepared for turn-in. This only left LCU 1541, Q-651, J-3741 ST-2107 and ST-2108. They were turned over to the 155<sup>th</sup> Terminal Company with the 110<sup>th</sup> Platoon assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Security Guard Company in



late December and the 97<sup>th</sup> was drawn down on 2 March 1972 and the flag sent back to Fort Eustis, Virginia.

### **7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group**

A ship hit and damaged the Benjamin Harrison Bridge over the James River. LCUs from the 97<sup>th</sup> and 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat Companies ferried automobiles across the James River until the bridge was repaired.

The 97<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat Company became a part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion. At that time all boat companies were under the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion. In 1983, it traded in its LCU 1466s for six new LCU 1600s: 1671, 1672, 1673, 1674, 1675, and 1676.

The 97<sup>th</sup> traded in its LCU 1600s for the LCU 2000s. It received LCU 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007.

The United States pressured the military junta in control of the government in Haiti to step down and allow the duly elected president Aristead to assume office. In September 1994, all the LCUs of the 97<sup>th</sup>, except 2006 which was in the ship yard, sailed down to Haiti under the command of 10<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion for support of Operation Uphold Democracy. This was the largest flotilla of Army watercraft since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Initially, this was planned as a forced entry operation but after the military junta stepped down, the military operation shifted to peacekeeping and nation building. Because of the deplorable state of the road networks and the possibility of trucks being overwhelmed by starving Haitians, the US Army units in the outlying areas, such as Cap-Hatien, Point Lobardi, Port de Paix, Anse D'Hainault and Les Cayes, were supplied by Army watercraft out of Port Au Prince. The United nation assumed responsibility for peacekeeping in Haiti in December.

On 16 September 2002, the 97<sup>th</sup> became a multi-component company.

### **Operation Iraqi Freedom**

The weapon inspection teams had departed Iraq in 1998 because of their lack of cooperation. Rhetoric and accusation increased between the President George Bush administration and that of Saddam Hussein in Iraq over the issue of weapons of mass destruction. On 8 October, Congress granted President Bush the power to launch a US military attack on Iraq.

As the likelihood of military operations increased, CENTCOM directed that 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group preposition part of its maritime fleet early. On 22 October, LSV-4 of the 1099<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company, 10<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion sailed on its own to Kuwait. LSV-3 was a USAR vessel. This brought the number of LSVs in theater up to 3. The smaller vessels would have to deploy aboard the *MV Tern*. 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group held a ROC Drill to walk its leaders through the uploading steps of the *MV Tern* on 22 October.

7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group held a Group-wide FTX RESOLUTE MONGOOSE '02 from 1-5 November. As part of that FTX, 24<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion completed the upload of twelve vessels; 5 LCUs of the 97<sup>th</sup>, 5 LCMs of the 1098<sup>th</sup>, 1 large tug and 1 small tug, and equipment on the *MV Tern* on 5 November for forward stationing for the President's war on terrorism. It would take the *Tern* nearly a month to reach Kuwait.

During this time, 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group made serious preparations for possible contingency operations. It held a Contingency Operations ROC Drill at the Modiset Building on 22 November. 143<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Command then held a Contingency Operations ROC Drill of its subordinate units at the Modiset Building on 26 November. The ROC drill was a rehearsal of the CENTCOM contingency plans. This provided both organizations the chance to work out any coordination problems.

On 5 December, 95 personnel from 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion and 824<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat Detachment deployed to Kuwait to download the *MV Tern*. After completing the download, the detachment returned to Ft Eustis.

Meanwhile the pressure picked up against Hussein's regime. On 8 November, the UN Security Council had passed Resolution 1441 requiring Iraq to comply with the disarmament agreements signed after the war. The UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) led by Hans Blix entered Iraq on 27 November. The increasing tension led to the threats of offensive military against Iraq if it failed to comply fully and accurately with the UN accords agreed to after Iraq's surrender following Desert Storm. While the Iraqi Government did send a weapons disclosure to UNMOVIC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by 17 December as required, many doubted its accuracy. The UN inspection teams had been allowed to reenter the country had were not denied access to any location, but however, failed to turn up any evidence of weapons of mass destruction. This provided a leverage for the UN Inspection teams to travel unfettered throughout the country.

On 18 December, 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group finally received its deployment order for the Persian Gulf. 6<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Battalions would deploy to the Persian Gulf leaving the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion behind. The UN Inspection Team had a deadline of 27 January to report back to the UN Security Council with their findings. That was the trigger event for military operations.

As the year began, 7<sup>th</sup> Group soldiers continued to deploy overseas. The 11<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion deployed to Kuwait to operate out of the Port of Ashuaiba. The 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion arrived at Arifjan.

The 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved its command post from Arifjan to Naval Base (KNB) on 28 January. It was augmented by the 824<sup>th</sup> Transportation (Medium Boat) Company (USAR) with 67 soldiers out of Tampa, Florida, and Moorehead City, North Carolina. The battalion conducted logistics-over-the-shore (LOTS) operations to offload ammunition. LSV-4 and LSV-6 relayed back and forth to Qatar to bring container into



port. This was a day run where one LSV was in port while the other was at Qatar. The TSV also ran rolling stock back and forth from Qatar, KNB and Bahran. LCU 2019, 2024, 2027, and 2029 of the 97<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat Company and LCM 80, 82, 91 and 98 of the 1098<sup>th</sup> Medium Boat Company conducted lighterage. 567<sup>th</sup> Trans (Motor) Company cleared cargo from the beach.

### **Campaign Credit**

#### **WWII**

Leyte

Luzon

#### **Vietnam**

Defense

Counteroffensive

Counteroffensive, Phase II

Counteroffensive, Phase III

Tet Counteroffensive

Counteroffensive, Phase IV

Counteroffensive, Phase V

Counteroffensive, Phase VI

Tet 69/ Counteroffensive

Summer-Fall 1969

Winter-Spring 1970

Sanctuary Counteroffensive

Counteroffensive, Phase VII

Consolidation I

Consolidation II

#### **Decorations**

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1965-1966

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1966-1967

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1967-1968

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, Streamer embroidered 17 October 1944.